

Black Hole by OTTSTF

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Summary:

There's a reason Hopper closed himself off after Sara's passing. Never did he want to experience pain like that again.

But here he is, laying on the sofa at the Byers', reminicing over his actions regarding El, barely preventing himself from breaking down in regret.

Luckily for him, Mike's here. Mike, to Hopper's surprise, understands his actions, and takes action himself to help El understand too.

Black Hole

Author's Note:

Inspired by [chapter seven](#) of [Noah_lit_8's 'Waves'](#).

Hopper hasn't had to deal with emotions since Sara's passing. Ever since then, he's not been interested in relationships, and the mere idea of starting a new family turned him right off. Never again would he allow himself to fall victim to the black hole that seems to be following him everywhere.

Or so he thought.

He felt disgusting as he revealed the location of those kids to Brenner, but he knew he had to. He had to, in order to get out of there to save Will. The knowledge of Eleven's abilities did soften the guilt somewhat; he was certain she could handle taking care of a few goons, but that knowledge couldn't remove the feeling of guilt outright.

Nonetheless, they'd found Will; they'd saved him, and brought him home. He was safe, so the deal wasn't in vein.

Then he'd heard the story of her disappearance.

He knew she'd vanished as a result of ending the Demogorgon. He also knew the reason the Demogorgon found them in the school in the first place: it's drawn to blood.

He knows the reason for blood being in the school. Lots of it, to be exact; all because he'd revealed Eleven's location to Brenner. He'd told them where to find her, they'd gone, and she'd popped their tiny brains with her huge one. Blood covered the floor around the bodies,

so the Demogorgon was bound to find them.

All because of him.

The guilt started there. The horrible feeling that he'd caused Eleven's death in order to save Will. He'd sacrificed the one who'd helped to find him. Despite Will now being home and safe, he still hates himself for being the reason Eleven's now gone, perhaps dead.

He barely sleeps. The guilt weighing on him like a tonne of bricks making it far too difficult to. The cries from Michael Wheeler, begging him to find her, breaking his heart every time. The odd call he'd pick up from the boy, seemingly trying to talk to her through a radio (good thinking, kid) also breaking his heart every time he catches it.

Then they get a report, from a man who claims a child flung a squirrel at his face, without laying a hand on it.

This report kicks Hopper into action immediately. He has a rough location, and the only person he knows who can fling a squirrel in such a manner is Eleven. It *has* to be her. She's out there, feeding off animals, all because of him.

It's that night that he leaves his first delivery of Eggos in a box.

He does this for nearly two months before the girl finally reveals herself to him. The sight of her, so thin and fragile, so scared yet fierce. He struggles to keep himself from breaking down in the relief of seeing her. He barely manages to keep himself from grabbing her into a hug and apologising for everything he'd done.

No. Don't tell her. Keep it a secret. Take her, give her a home. Grandpa's old cabin will do just nicely.

The second she repeats his word, "*home*", is the second he knows he's opened himself to emotion again. The mere fact she's accepting his offer, happy to live with him as her guardian (him, taking care of a superhero, holy shit) is an amazing feeling. He forces himself to keep his image; to not drop to his knees to thank her endlessly for accepting his offer.

The first day she wakes up with a smile on her face is the brightest day of his life. The memory of how he found her, compared to the happy, healthy girl he's now cared for for a little under two months being a glorious image, a glorious reminder of how much he's helped her.

The first day she welcomes him home with a warmed lunch is the first day he finally sheds a tear in front of her. He wipes it away immediately, but it's not quick enough.

"Sad? Why sad?" she asks, face sad herself, but also confused, likely at the sight of tears combined with a smile.

"No!" he quickly blurts out. "Not sad, El. Not sad at all." he laughs. "Happy. Really happy." he finally amends. "Thank you so much, kid." he wraps his arms around her as he thanks, patting her ever-growing head of hair (which makes him happy every time he realises how much it *has* grown).

That's the best lunch he's ever had, if you ask him. He knows it's just a placebo affect, but the fact that she'd warmed it for him to welcome him home, that fact makes it taste so much better. Every bite he takes threat ens to put a huge smirk of pride on his face, in the knowledge that she apparently cares for him as much as he does her.

It's not until the day he's sat in his truck, parked outside the lab that once held her prisoner, that he feels guilt once again. Their argument the night before replays in his head endlessly. He feels selfish; he

knows he'd kept her locked up exactly like the assholes here once had, even if he was doing so to protect her. He realises that, perhaps, he'd kept her locked up a *bit* too harshly. Maybe the odd visit to the Wheeler kid would've been fine... not in the house, not by any means, but elsewhere. Heck, maybe plans to bring the kid to the cabin could've been developed.

He knows that she's friendly with the others as well, but it's always been "*Mike*" she'd mention. Rarely did she ever bring the others up; which he knows is thanks to the way Michael had treated her. He'd been the first to give her a home, to feed her, to treat her like a human. El's attachment to him only makes sense.

So when he sees their faces light up in the sight of each-other in the Byers' house, he nearly breaks down once again. He holds his image, sucks up his guilt, and butts in as Michael asks why she'd never responded. He places the blame on himself before Michael can ask her any further, despite knowing he'd probably never truly get mad.

Michael's reaction, the punches thrown before absolute breakdown in Hopper's arms, really blows Hopper away. He's never seen such a mix of emotion before. Disbelief, anger, sadness, relief, all displayed in a matter of seconds. Hopper, now, truly feels sorry for the both of them. He's known El has been desperate for this reunion, but he'd never seen how bad it had affected Michael. The guilt just bubbles up inside him once again.

Then they're in front of the gate, on the platform, dangling in the open air. He's shitting himself, if he's to be honest; yet the superhero next to him holds *his* hand in anticipation of the task ahead. To say he feels pride bubble up inside him would be an understatement.

All too soon, she's closing the gate and he's fighting off Demo-Dogs. As she starts screaming, he shits himself all over again. He looks to her; the first thing he notices is that she's grown above his height suddenly.

No, no she hasn't. She's freaking floating. Holy actual shit.

The second thing he notices, is the raw anger in her face. That facial expression is not one that any child should be able to produce, *ever*.

Then she drops.

The gate's closed, but she's falling. Immediately he snaps into action, catching her before she makes it to the floor. The panic inside him cannot be described with words as she looks lifeless. But then, she faintly wraps her arms around him.

The relief that shoots through him is huge. For a moment, he thought he'd lost *another* daughter (or close enough) and would have to deal with the emotions all over again. But no, not this time. El is stupidly powerful, and she's not going to let some puny interdimensional gate take her down.

They're at the Byers'. El is in Jonathan's bed, sharing with Michael, after plenty of debate. He knows they're kids, that they'd do nothing stupid, especially under the circumstances. But he also needs to uphold an image; and letting two kids share a bed seems a bit... *weird*, to him.

But all too soon, Joyce is by his side, shutting him up. "Just let them, Hop. She deserves a good night's sleep, and neither of them will get any if they're separated tonight."

He's sighing, but the look on both of the kid's faces is overpowering.

They're both trying their hardest to silently thank the living crap out of Joyce, who's just smiling her glorious motherly smile at them both.

"Fine. But just one night! I can't have you climbing through her window every night to be with her, understood?" he stares directly at Michael.

"Of course, sir. I would never try to do anything like that; I promise."

Yeah, sure, kid. She says one word and you'd pull the moon down for her. He knows full well that there *will* be more bed sharing between these two, without a doubt, if he wants to keep his head in one piece.

The others, after some giggling, followed by death stares from both Hopper and Joyce that silence them all immediately, crash onto the floor after they all (ever so kindly) offer him the couch; each refusing to take it themselves.

"You've been through a lot."

"No party member treated differently."

Those are the two main arguments they make. He's tempted to let a '*what about Wheeler?*' blurt out at the latter, but he knows he'd better not.

And that lands us to where we are at the moment; Hopper laying on the sofa, everyone else asleep, whilst his thoughts run absolutely wild regarding the girl who's currently sleeping with the boy who'd first showed her care.

He can't help but continuously think of the moment she began falling after closing the gate. That thought that she'd exhausted herself beyond her limit, and sacrificed herself to end all the trouble; *the thought that he'd lost another daughter.*

Then his thoughts are back on the moment he'd told Brenner where she was, with everyone else.

No. I can't be thinking of this shit right now. Now is good, it's all over. She's safe, and so are everyone else.

He jumps up before remembering he's not alone in the building. He needs fresh air; more than the now covered smashed window provides.

He's out on the porch, letting his mind go crazy, when suddenly he hears footsteps from behind him. He turns to see El and Michael, hand in hand, approaching.

"Why are you out here?" El asks first.

"I could ask you the same thing." he responds immediately.

"You talk in your sleep. We heard you." she responds.

I've been sleeping? is his first immediate thought. Second, he's panicked over what he may have said, and what they may have heard.

"Oh. Sorry about that." he says.

"I couldn't help but overhear something about a *'science experiment'* and telling someone where said experiment is." Michael follows.

Shit...

"Was that about me?" El asks.

Bigger shit...

"And who were you telling?" Michael questions.

Absolute shit.

Hopper fails to keep a straight face. He's not angry, he's full of guilt, and it shows.

"It was about me." El deduces.

"I'm so sorry." Hopper finally speaks.

"What the hell have you done?" Mike tries to keep quiet.

"It was back when Will was missing; while you guys were at the school." Hopper says first, hoping to calm Mike down a little.

"You... you told *them* where we were, didn't you?"

"You told Papa?"

His head drops. "I had to, I'm sorry."

"Why!?" El now shouts.

"What the hell!" Mike immediately follows.

"Guys, please! I'll explain, just please try to understand."

" Explain." El demands.

Hopper sighs.

"They had us trapped in the lab; me and Mrs. Byers. They demanded I tell them where you were." he looks to El.

"I made them a deal. They swear to leave everyone alone, I say."

"You could've lied!" Michael says.

"Yeah, I could've lied and then they'd find out, probably come and kill me, probably the rest of you too."

"So you decided El should be thrown back at them? Just like that?"

"I hated myself as I told them, and I've hated myself ever since. Believe me. I just had no choice."

"The Demogorgon found us because of you!" El blurts out.

"They were going to kill everyone but me anyway!"

Hopper's eyes widen. "What?"

"Guns. All pointed at everyone. That is why I killed them all. That is why there was blood everywhere. That is why the Demogorgon found us and I went to the Upside-Down!"

"I know, kid. I know it's all my fault, and I'm sorry. I hated myself, right up until the police report that led me to you, I was a broken mess all over again because I knew I caused it all. That's why as soon as I had an idea of where you might be, I started searching and leaving food. All I've wanted to do since then is make it up to you, El. I just couldn't tell you; I couldn't bare the idea of you leaving me."

They're both silent.

"I'm sorry, okay? And I promise you, I'll be trying to apologise for the rest of my life because I know, whatever I try to do, won't make it up for this."

El turns, and starts walking away from the house.

"El!" they both shout.

Hopper's about to run after her, but Mike grabs his hand.

"Don't. I'll try to fix this, okay?"

Hopper's internally screaming; he shouldn't be letting two kids walk off in the middle of the night, but he knows, if he tries to chase after her, she'll just continue running. Michael, on the other hand, she'll stop for. He is the only one that can fix this.

So he nods his head, and allows Mike to run after her.

"El, it's me." Mike says as he walks up to her slowly.

"Mike." she exhales, immediately grabbing him into a hug.

"I can't believe he hold him."

"I know, El, but you've got to put it behind you." Mike tells her.

" Put it behind me? How can I do that, Mike? He nearly got you killed!" she exclaims.

"But he didn't, and you heard him: he's hated himself ever since. It was before he really knew you. I'm sure, if it was now, rather than then, he wouldn't do it. Because now, he really cares about you, El. I can see it, he thinks of you as a daughter."

S he's silent for a brief moment.

"You think so?"

" I know so, El. I promise. The way he's hating himself, the fact he's having nightmares about it. It just says he regrets it, really does. And anyone that knows him knows he doesn't really regret anything, or let it show at least. So yeah, El. He definitely thinks of you as a daughter now."

She ponders over his words. She reflects on the good moments they've shared, and must admit...

"I think of him as a father, too. A proper one."

Mike smiles at that.

"I'm happy for you, El." he takes her hands in both of his. "You deserve someone as good as him. I know it seems like he's locked you up, but he's just been scared. I don't think giving him a hard time for what he's done would be a good idea. He's been doing everything he can to protect you, El."

"Yeah." she agrees. "Thanks, Mike." she hugs him again.

" No problem, El. Come on, let's get back."

" Hop?" El calls as she and Mike walk up to him.

" El!" he immediately jumps to his feet, relieved.

They just stare at each-other for a moment, until El pulls him into a hug. They remain silent, but Hopper sneakily gives Mike a thumb up with a smile, as a silent thanks.

Mike responds with a thumb up of his own, dropping to the sofa as he observes the two let out the relief they need.

" I'm sorry, El." Hopper eventually speaks up.

"I understand. I'm sorry too." she responds.

"No, no, you've got nothing to be sorry for. I nearly fed you to the black hole before we even got started, and I'm never going to be able to forget it."

El quickly runs through her mind, searching for something to respond with.

"And I've destroyed our home plenty of times too. I think we're even." she says.

Hopper lets out a small laugh, much to her relief.

"Yeah, okay." he says, patting her mop of curls. " We're even."

The three of them return to their designated sleeping area shortly after; Hopper on the sofa, El and Mike in Jonathan's bed; this time no debate over it, having been settled earlier.

"Thank you, Mike." she repeats once again.

"What for?" he asks, confused at the sudden thanks.

"For helping me forgive Hop."

"Oh! Yeah, of course, El. You two need to stay on good terms."

She nods her head.

"And for sleeping with me."

As if a switch was flicked, Mike feels his cheeks glowing.

"Hopper told me why it's a 'big deal'." she says, pausing briefly as she quotes Hopper.

"But you still want to. Thank you."

"Oh." Mike says, still feeling like he could be used as a stove.

"Yeah, um, after everything that's happened, I don't think I could sleep anywhere else right now."

She smiles. "Me neither."

She takes his hand, intertwining her fingers with his easily.

"Goodnight, Mike."

He smiles back.

"Goodnight, El."

Author's Note:

Thanks very much for reading! Hope I served the "El finds out Hopper ratted them out" story well enough!

Feedback is a writer's drug. If you've got the time, please consider leaving a comment.